CLAIMS

1. A method of processing business reply mail, comprising acts of:

receiving a stream of mail pieces that includes at least one business reply mail piece and at least one non-business reply mail piece;

automatically identifying the at least one business reply mail piece in the stream of mail pieces; and

in response to the act of identifying the at least one business reply mail piece, automatically reading information on the at least one business reply mail piece.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of automatically identifying the business reply mail piece further comprises an act of:

distinguishing the at least one business reply mail piece from the at least one non-business reply mail piece.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of automatically reading information on the at least one business reply mail piece further comprises acts of:

capturing at least one image of the at least one business reply mail piece; and

processing the at least one image to convert the information on the at least one business reply mail piece into electronic form.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of automatically reading information on the at least one business reply mail piece further comprises an act of:

reading a barcode on the at least one business reply mail piece.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one business reply mail piece is addressed to an intended recipient and the method further comprises an act of:

discarding the at least one business reply mail piece without delivering the at least one business reply piece to the intended recipient.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising an act of:

storing the information in electronic form.

7.   The method of claim 1, wherein the business reply mail piece is associated with an originating entity and the method further comprises an act of:

receiving the information at the originating entity.

8.   The method of claim 7, wherein the act of sending the information to the originating entity further comprises an act of sending the information to the originating entity in electronic form.

9.   The method of claim 1, wherein the acts of receiving, automatically identifying, and automatically reading are performed at a mail processing facility.

10.   The method of claim 9, wherein the information includes a return address of a sender of the at least one business reply mail piece and a request for additional materials, and wherein the method further comprises act of:

identifying the request for additional materials; and

in response to identifying the request, sending the additional materials from the mail processing facility to the sender.

11.   At least one computer readable medium encoded with instructions that, when executed on a computer system perform a method of processing business reply mail, the method comprising acts of:

receiving a stream of mail pieces that includes at least one business reply mail piece and at least one non-business reply mail piece;

automatically identifying the at least one business reply mail piece in the stream of mail pieces; and

in response to the act of identifying the at least one business reply mail piece, automatically reading information on the at least one business reply mail piece.

12.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the act of automatically identifying the business reply mail piece further comprises an act of:

distinguishing the at least one business reply mail piece from the at least one non-business reply mail piece.

13.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the act of automatically reading information on the at least one business reply mail piece further comprises acts of:

capturing at least one image of the at least one business reply mail piece; and

processing the at least one image to convert the information on the at least one business reply mail piece into electronic form.

14.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the act of automatically reading information on the at least one business reply mail piece further comprises an act of:

reading a barcode on the at least one business reply mail piece.

15.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the at least one business reply mail piece is addressed to an intended recipient and the method further comprises an act of:

discarding the at least one business reply mail piece without delivering the at least one business reply piece to the intended recipient.

16.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 11, further comprising an act of:

storing the information in electronic form.

17.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the business reply mail piece is associated with an originating entity and the method further comprises an act of:

receiving the information at the originating entity.

18.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 17, wherein the act of sending the information to the originating entity further comprises an act of sending the information to the originating entity in electronic form.

5   19.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 11, wherein the acts of receiving, automatically identifying, and automatically reading are performed at a mail processing facility.

20.   The at least one computer readable medium of claim 19, wherein the information
10   includes a return address of a sender of the at least one business reply mail piece and a request for additional materials, and wherein the method further comprises act of:
        identifying the request for additional materials; and
        in response to identifying the request, sending the additional materials from the mail processing facility to the sender.
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21.   A sorting apparatus comprising:
        at least one feeder unit that receives a stream of mail pieces that includes at least one business reply mail piece and at least one non-business reply mail piece; and
        at least one controller that:
20   automatically identifies the at least one business reply mail piece in the stream of mail pieces; and
        in response to identifying the at least one business reply mail piece, automatically reads information on the at least one business reply mail piece.

25   22.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the at least one controller:
        distinguishes the at least one business reply mail piece from the at least one non-business reply mail piece.

23.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the sorting apparatus includes at least
30   one camera that captures at least one image of the at least one business reply mail piece and wherein the at least one controller processes the at least one image to convert the information on the at least one business reply mail piece into electronic form.

24.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the act sorting apparatus further comprises a barcode reader that reads a barcode on the at least one business reply mail piece.

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25.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the sorting apparatus further comprises at least one output bin that receives mail pieces to be discarded, and wherein the at least one controller routes the at least one business reply mail piece to the at least one output bin.

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26.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the at least one controller stores the information in electronic form.

27.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the business reply mail piece is
15   associated with an originating entity and the at least one controller sends the information to the originating entity.

28.   The sorting apparatus of claim 27, wherein the at least one controller sends the information to the originating entity in electronic form.

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29.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the business reply mail piece is associated with an originating entity and the at least one controller receives a request for the information from the originating entity.

25   30.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, located at a mail processing facility.

31.   The sorting apparatus of claim 21, wherein the information includes an address of an initial recipient of the business reply mail piece.